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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; POSSIBLE RETURN OF THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM
TO ARGENTINA; ARGENTINA PASSING ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION;
06/14/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Leading international stories today include the possible return of the Visa Waiver Program to Argentina; and Argentina passing anti-terrorism legislation, allegedly under pressure by the U.S. and others.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Argentines could again travel to the US without a visa"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (06/14) "Argentines could once again enter the US without any visa, beginning January 2008..., although the (Argentine) Government should first meet a number of requisites.

"Yesterday, the US Senate passed an amendment that extends visa-free travel privileges to allies in the Global War on Terror... Argentina, which last night passed legislation criminalizing terrorism, is one of the candidates.

"The amendment was passed by a vote of 60 to 38. It authorizes the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department to extend the Visa Waiver Program to countries supporting the US in keeping terrorists outside of its borders.

"According to a UPI wire service cable, out of the 19 countries designated by the US Department of State as new possible VWP participants, only 9 (Argentina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Malta, Greece, Israel, South Korea and Thailand) honor a basic requisite - they all have less than 10 percent-visa rejection rate... In addition to the political factors to be taken into account, Argentina will also have to honor a series of requisites related to its national security, which are imposed by the amendment. This means that, for now, its entry into the program is not certain."

- "The (Argentine) Congress passes anti-terrorism legislation, which was demanded by the US"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" (06/14) "With the explicit purpose of avoiding sanctions from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to which Argentina belongs, (Argentina's) Lower House yesterday passed legislation criminalizing both terrorism and terrorist financing...

"... The initiative had to be approved before June 23, when the FATF's plenary session meets in Paris. Last February, the FATF warned the country that if it did not revise its legislation according to international anti-money laundering norms, it could well be sanctioned through a 'public statement' warning that 'financial operations in the country should be monitored because

they could be suspicious.' Some (Argentine) governmental sources consulted by 'La Nacion' admitted that this kind of public statement could bring about the closure of Argentine bank accounts abroad and other penalties that could hinder and make financial transactions more expensive."

- "Some legislation under pressure"

Alfredo Gutierrez, columnist of leading "Clarín," opines (06/14)
"Next June 27, when the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meets in Paris to review the Argentine case based on FATF's recommendations to the country, Argentina will be able to breathe calmly..."

"The main FATF recommendation to Argentina was to pass legislation against terrorist financing."

"During the (FATF's) February meeting in Brussels, delegates from three countries (the US, Canada and England) proposed that, in view of the country's non-compliance, a public statement would be launched warning the rest of the world that Argentina failed to honor international standards, which could complicate commercial transactions."

"Finally, this approach did not move forward, but everyone took note of the warning. FATF's pressure derives from a UN agreement aimed at repressing terrorist financing, which Argentina signed in 1999. However, it is hard to define what 'terrorism' is in a country whose history does not help."

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